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In Memoriam Claude Herbulot

\*19.2.1908 – 19.1.2006†

Axel Hausmann & Manfred Sommerer

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In the late evening of January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2006, Claude Herbulot passed to his rest, only one month before his 98<sup>th</sup> birthday.

At the same time, in the evening after the opening session of the 4<sup>th</sup> Forum Herbulot at Hobart University in Tasmania on January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2006, the participants to the meeting were operating several light-traps at 1000 m near the timberline up Hobart's Mt. Wellington. It was a wonderful warm night yielding many fine Geometrids among which a hitherto nondescript green *Chlorocoma* species was especially appreciated by the authors of these lines as good news to the patron of the meeting. Claude Herbulot had much liked Cathy Young's and Peter McQuillan's idea to organize this Forum Herbulot in Tasmania and to combine it with ample collecting opportunities at selected habitats: Australia was the one continent Claude Herbulot never had a chance to visit himself for collecting. Until his very last conscious moments on earth, as was noted by his nearest, the Forum Herbulot "down under" and the perspective of having an intriguing gap in his collection finally closed was on his mind. We are glad that this last wish of Claude Herbulot can be fulfilled in a way that certainly would have pleased our dear friend. Fine specimens of more than a third of the 310 Geometrid species known from Tasmania now enrich the Collection Herbulot at the ZSM (marked by a special white label). Moreover, the organizers of the 4<sup>th</sup> Forum Herbulot, Cathy Young and Peter McQuillan, on behalf of all participants, will dedicate to Claude Herbulot the above mentioned new *Chlorocoma* species when they will describe it.

The outstanding lepidopterist Claude Herbulot was honoured by his friends and colleagues with a great number of patronyms: three genera and 29 species in the family Geometridae, but also many a taxon in other insect families and orders. To Geometrid taxonomy and systematics he contributed, starting in 1930, altogether 286 scientific publications, the latest one dating from 2005! As Scoble (1995) acknowledged, the known biodiversity of the Geometridae worldwide owes him alone about 5% of the named valid species. With D. S. Fletcher, L. B. Prout, and W. Warren he shares the collective responsibility for describing around 75 % of the known Afrotropical Geometrid species, and Claude Herbulot, L. B. Prout and P. Viette described even 80 % of the species known from Madagascar (Scoble et al., Using

taxonomic data to estimate species richness in Geometridae, J. Lepidopterists' Soc. 49, 1995: 136-147).

During the last months he accomplished, with the help of his daughters Christiane and Hélène, a complete list of his publications in form of a data file (available on the web-site of the Forum Herbulot).

In many a phone call, when he needed some information from the collection that is housed at the ZSM since February 2000, he stunned his partner by the precise recollection of details which he could not have seen for years: On a postcard from his last cruise in the Mediterranean in 2002 he wrote "Today we are at Corfu island. Have a look into the box no. 839, under the species *Ematurga atomaria*, 11<sup>th</sup> row, last specimen: This was collected on Corfu island by a French Marshal on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 1916, in the First World War, during the battle of the French army against the K&K troops." In his late years he would sometimes complain about his failing memory of species names, but at the same instant quoting the complete row of synonyms to that species including their years of publication!

It was a pleasure to listen to his well founded remarks on all kinds of questions linked with Geometrids, and of course, the background information gathered during a long life from the acquaintance with the peers of entomological research and collecting. What a pity that the wealth of the stories which he could tell, often with a charming boyish smile, were never written down! For instance, when asked about the strange discolorations in the cover of some of his store boxes he would take pleasure to astonish the listener by pointing out that the French collector Balestre used to put raw meat upon those boxes to feed his ravens. And that the same Balestre, fatally in love with the wife of the Austrian lepidopterist and pianist Giesekeing, had shot Giesekeing "by accident" during a hunting party and committed suicide in the course of the trial. His collection was then purchased by D. Lucas whose collection was sold to the Natural History Museum of Paris which, however, could not afford to buy the whole lot so that Claude Herbulot could acquire the Geometrids. Voilà! So the vicissitudes of life, often associated with the specimens in a rich collection, even emanate from the external implements of the Collection Herbulot.

Claude Herbulot was decorated with the Jakob Hübner Award of the Association for Tropical Lepidop-



Figs 1-5. 1. Claude Herbulot at work with his collection. 2. CH at his home in Paris with Spix Medal (ZSM) and Jakob Hübner Award (ATL). 3. CH at the ZSM during the official ceremony of the transfer of his collection to Munich. 4. C.H. with his wife Colette and the participants of the first Forum Herbulot 2001 at the ZSM. 5. CH speaking at the official ceremony of the transfer of his collection to Munich (ZSM).

tera (Florida) and the Spix Medal of the Friends of the ZSM. But he was more than a great lepidopterist: he was a great learned man. With his law degree (licence en droit), he worked for the French Sugar Association during his professional life. His interests and precise knowledge in classical history, literature, poetry, and art were extraordinary and reflected in precious volumes of his rich personal library. At the conference dinner of the Forum Herbulot in Munich (2001) he impressed the party by reciting long passages of Homer's *Iliad* in the original Greek. But he was also proud to have been a good athlete during his young years. Finally, there is now a French moth named in allusion to this fact (*Idaea dromtikos*: cf. Hausmann, *The Geometrid Moths of Europe* 2, 2004: 220). Detailed additional information on the life of Herbulot is published in French language by Philippe Darge (*Bull./Ann. Soc. Ent. Fr.* 2006), and by Joël Minet (*Nota lepidopterologica* 29 3/4).

He leaves us not only an amazing collection (cf. Hausmann, *Die Sammlung Herbulot*, Paris, in: *Jahres-*

bericht 2000 der Generaldirektion der Staatlichen Naturwissenschaftlichen Sammlungen Bayerns, 2001: 27-30), which ranks among the finest in the world, and a wealth of scientific publications but also, and perhaps most of all, the memory of a charming, wise, and reliable good friend. We will miss him much. RiP!

*De toutes les belles choses  
Qui vous manquent en hiver  
Qu'aimez-vous mieux? – Moi les roses;  
– Moi, l'aspect d'un beau pré vert;  
– Moi, la moisson blondissante,  
Chevelure des sillons;  
– Moi, le rossignol qui chante;  
– Et moi, les beaux papillons.*

Gérard de Nerval

(poem taken from the book of prayers of the funeral ceremony, Paris, Saint-Bruno d'Issy-les-Moulineaux, 25.1.2006)

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Autor(en)/Author(s): Hausmann Axel, Sommerer Manfred

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